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STARK OBJECTS TO GRANTING GUN MANUFACTURERS, DEALERS EXEMPTIONS FROM LAWSUITS

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, U.S. Representative Pete Stark (D-CA, 13th) gave the following statement in objection to S.397, a bill which would provide gun makers, dealers and trade associations special exemptions from lawsuits. Stark's statement follows:

"Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the so-called Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act because I don't believe that giving gun makers, gun dealers, and gun trade associations special exemption from lawsuits makes our streets any safer.

"If this law had been in place, the families of victims of the D.C.-area sniper could never have held negligent suppliers accountable. In September 2004, eight victims' families received a settlement from the dealer that "lost" the snipers' assault rifle from its inventory, along with at least 238 other guns. The victims' families also received a settlement from the manufacturer who negligently supplied the dealer despite its record of missing guns and regulatory violations. Most importantly, as part of the settlement, the manufacturer agreed to instruct its dealers of safer sales practices that should prevent other criminals from obtaining guns.

"Since the National Rifle Association owns about two-thirds of the Congress, guns have fewer safety regulations than teddy bears. The American people can't look to Congress to protect them, so they have no choice but to turn to the courts. It's no surprise that this last resort will now be shut down out of deference to the almighty gun industry.

"As if this blatant pandering to an industry responsible for widespread violence and mayhem isn't bad enough, this bill also violates the fundamental right of every American to have their day in court. As soon as the President signs this bill into law, Americans will be able to sue the manufacturer of any product except for guns for death, injury, and any other kind of negligence. Congress, at the behest of the NRA, will close the courthouse doors to gun victims.

"I vote no on this bill because no industry, certainly not the gun industry, should have the right to conduct their business without the oversight of the judicial system."